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Main Menu**Apply to Honors ▾****About the Program ▾****Student Resources ▾****Handbooks/Forms ▾**

[Home](#) > [Uncategorized](#) > Georgia Southern Students Win Benjamin A. Gilman Scholarships for Study Abroad

Georgia Southern Students Win Benjamin A. Gilman Scholarships for Study Abroad

July 18, 2013

Three Georgia Southern University students received Benjamin A. Gilman Scholarships to study abroad this summer and the coming school year. Nicole Puckett and Britnee "Jake" Claxton will travel to Japan during the upcoming school year, and Chari Chin-Young travels to France this summer. These three awards bring the university's total to 18 students who have received the scholarship since spring 2007.

Puckett and Claxton will travel to Nagoya, Japan and study at Nagoya University of Foreign Studies, and both will be there for the full academic year.

While in Nagoya, Puckett and Claxton will take intensive language courses. "I have taken every language course offered by Georgia Southern," said Claxton, a junior International Studies major. "This trip will help me further my Japanese language education."

Puckett shares the same ambition. "My biggest goal while in Japan for a year is to become fluent in the language," said Puckett, a junior International Studies major and honors student. "I also want to become better acquainted with the culture and history of Japan, which will help give me a better understanding of the world."

Chin-Young, a Psychology major and McNair Scholar, is excited to take a Sociology course in France where she will focus on reading French theorists Jean-Francois Lyotard, Jean Baudrillard, and Jacques Lacan. In her research, Chin-Young has explored stereotype threats and mixed-race individuals. She is learning more about minority experiences in France during her time there.

Likewise, Puckett has directed her research toward her study abroad trip. "I really tried to make all of my classes up until this point relevant to my study abroad. In my Honors Introduction to Anthropology class, I wrote a paper about the prehistoric Jomon period of Japan, and I also took almost every class relevant to Japanese history offered at Georgia Southern," said Puckett.

While in Japan, Claxton also is looking forward to the educational experiences outside the classroom, including field trips to Shirakawa-go and Gokayama, guest lectures on rituals and traditions, and hands on workshops that further introduce her to the culture.

Gilman recipients receive funding that directly supports their study abroad trips, and upon their return each awardee must complete a "Follow-On Project" designed to encourage students to travel the world and study abroad.

Chin-Young will develop a Follow-On Project entitled "ENOUGH" based on her research into stereotypes and confronting those stereotypes. She will develop presentations for the students at Boys & Girls Club and show them the world, hopefully inspiring them in their own college study abroad ambitions.

"Personally, I am seeking to deliver this program because it is one I wish I had," Chin-Young said. The follow-on service Claxton has planned focuses on encouraging Georgia Southern students to consider study abroad, especially those who are hesitant because of the cost. She plans to educate these students of the opportunity the Gilman Scholarship offers and the process for applying. She will make presentations to classes and student organizations, and she will also develop a blog about her experience throughout the whole study abroad process and her time in Japan.

Likewise, Puckett wants to inspire students to travel and learn more about the world. Concerned about recent education that have minimized Geography in high school curriculum, Puckett will return to her hometown schools to talk about her travels, Japan, and the benefit of learning about world and study abroad.

All three students intend to absorb as much as they can of the countries they visit. They know that taking advantage of study abroad will prepare them for the challenges and opportunities they will have after graduation. Puckett plans to find work as a translator either for the United Nations or for a corporation. Claxton

also aspires to become a Japanese language translator. Chin-Young intends to become a member of the Peace Corps and pursue a Ph.D. in Psychology.

"Ultimately, I want to travel and build non-profit organizations that support higher educations for minority and underprivileged children globally," said Chin-Young. "This study abroad trip is the first stepping stone toward that goal."

Puckett said, "Japan isn't the end. It's merely the beginning. There are so many places to go in the world and so many people to talk to that I don't think there will be any way for me to be satisfied with just one tiny piece of the globe."

The Center for International Studies at Georgia Southern University houses the Study Abroad office and provides many study abroad opportunities for undergraduate students. The University Honors Program at Georgia Southern University advises students from across the university in their pursuit of national and international competitive scholarships. The University Honors Program provides a small college atmosphere in the context of a large comprehensive university and is designed to foster the development of a critical sense of inquiry, a spirit of creativity, a global perspective, and an ethic of civic responsibility.

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